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General Assembly

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Sixty-third session
Agenda item 45
Culture of peace

Letter dated 22 October 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward the revised text of the Declaration of the Conference on Interfaith Dialogue, which was convened by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, in Madrid from 16 to 18 July 2008 and previously issued as document A/63/311 (see annex). We would appreciate it if the present letter and its annex could be issued as a document of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly under agenda item 45.

(*Signed*) Abdullatif H. **Sallam**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 22 October 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Madrid Declaration issued by the World Conference on Dialogue

Organized by the Muslim World League in Madrid

Under the Patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud

16-18 July 2008
(13-15 Rajab 1429 A.H.)

In response to the kind invitation of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, the Muslim World League organized the World Conference on Dialogue in Madrid from 16 to 18 July 2008 (13 to 15 Rajab 1429 A.H.).

The participants in the Conference, which included followers of the world religions coming from different cultures in addition to researchers and intellectuals, expressed their profound gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques for his patronage, his presence at the inauguration of the Conference and his speech, considered as a major document of the Conference.

Furthermore, the participants expressed their gratefulness and appreciation to His Majesty Juan Carlos I of Spain for his comprehensive welcoming speech, to H.E. Mr. Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, Prime Minister of Spain, for his participation in the opening session and for his efforts towards dialogue among cultures and civilizations, to the Spanish Government for hosting the Conference in Spain, a country rich in historical heritage common to the followers of different religions which has contributed substantially to the development of human civilization:

- Recalled the objectives of the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for making collective efforts aimed at the enhancement of international relations, the creation of a harmonious human community and the promotion of dialogue as an educated way of cooperation;
- Evoked the document of the United Nations General Assembly in 1994, which called for tolerance and the spread of the culture of peace, as well as the declarations of 1995 as the Year of Tolerance and of 2001 as the Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations;
- Acknowledged the Appeal of Makkah, issued by the World Islamic Conference in Dialogue, convened by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and organized by the Muslim World League earlier in 2008;
- Built on the agreement among the followers of religious and leading cultures regarding the value of dialogue as the best way to achieve mutual understanding and cooperation in human relations as well as peaceful coexistence among nations.

In light of the above, the participants affirm the following principles:

1. The unity of humankind has existed from the origin of creation; there is equality among human beings, irrespective of their colour, ethnicity, race, religion or culture.

2. Human beings suffer from an interior dichotomy between evil inclinations and a love for good and justice. With divine help and the active participation of each person, they can dominate what is evil in them and progress on the path of good.

3. Diversity and differences among peoples is a reality permitted by God and should serve human advancement and prosperity.

4. Religions strive to call forth the obedience of persons to their Creator as well as to promote happiness, justice, security and peace for humankind. These religions seek to enhance ways of understanding, coexistence and cooperation among people despite their differences. They also call for spreading human moral values, wisdom and respect, rejecting all forms of extremism and terrorism.

5. Respect for religions, their places of worship and their symbols should be promoted therefore preventing the derision of what people consider sacred.

6. Respecting human dignity, promoting human rights, fostering peace, honouring agreements and respecting the traditions of peoples as well as their right to security, freedom and self-determination, are the basis for building good relations among all peoples. Achieving this is a major objective of all religions and prominent cultures.

7. Religions, while they call for obedience to the Creator, are aware of their capacity to offer a valid contribution in promoting moral values; fighting against crime, terrorism, corruption and drug addiction; preserving the institution of the family as well as protecting societies from deviant behaviours.

8. Family is considered the basic unit of society and its nucleus, and therefore it must be protected against any threat of disintegration as it is the cornerstone for a secure and stable society.

9. Dialogue is one of the essentials of life. It is also one of the most important means for peoples to become acquainted with each other, to foster cooperation and mutual benefit and to search for truth, contributing, therefore, to the happiness of humankind.

10. The preservation of the environment and its protection from pollution and other dangers are considered among the major objectives for all religions and cultures.

Mindful of the necessity of implementing the above-mentioned principles through dialogue, the Conference reviewed the process of dialogue and its impediments, indicating the tragedies that afflicted humanity in the twentieth century. The Conference also noted that terrorism in one of the most serious obstacles to dialogue and peaceful coexistence, and that it is a global phenomenon which must be confronted in a serious, responsible and just way, requiring unified international efforts. This calls for international agreement on defining terrorism, addressing its root causes, and promoting justice, security and stability in the world.

Based on the above, the Conference recommends the following:

1. To reject theories that call for the clash of civilizations and cultures and to be aware of the danger of campaigns seeking to create and deepen conflicts, so destabilizing peace and security.

2. To enhance common human moral values, cooperate in their promotion within societies and address the problems that hinder their achievement.

3. To disseminate the culture of mutual respect and understanding through dialogue among peoples by holding conferences and symposiums, as well as by developing relevant cultural, educational and media programmes.

4. To agree on international guidelines for dialogue among the followers of religions in different cultures through which moral values and ethical principles, which are common elements of religions, are confirmed and supported so as to strengthen stability and achieve prosperity for all humans.

5. To work on a document related to the promotion or respect of religions and their symbols.

To fulfil the above-mentioned objectives formulated by this Conference, the participants have agreed on adopting the following:

1. Forming a working group to study the problems which hinder dialogue and prevent it from realizing its desired objectives. The group would also prepare a study that provides a vision for the solutions to these problems.

2. Promoting cooperation among religious, cultural, educational and media institutions to deepen and consolidate ethical values, to encourage constructive social practices and to confront immoral behaviour, family disintegration and other such degeneration.

3. Organizing inter-religious and intercultural meetings, conducting research, executing media programmes and using the Internet and other media for the dissemination of the culture of peace, understanding and harmonious coexistence.

4. Promoting the practice of dialogue among religions, civilizations and cultures through educational, cultural and media activities, in particular taking into consideration younger generations.

5. Informing the United Nations General Assembly of the results reached by the Conference.

In abiding by the above agreed principles and concepts, the participants emphasized that it is important for this World Conference on Dialogue to continue; consequently, sessions should be held periodically.

The participants extended their profound gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, for his initiative and invitation to this World Conference on Dialogue. They also expressed their appreciation to the Muslim World League and other organizations that cooperated in organizing the Conference. They encouraged the Muslin World League to continue its efforts in the fields of dialogue and cooperation among nations and peoples, hoping that their common aspirations can be fulfilled.

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General Assembly

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Sixty-third session
Agenda item 64
Promotion and protection of human rights

Letter dated 20 September 2008 from the Permanent Representatives of Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Norway and Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

On behalf of our countries, we would like first to congratulate you on your election as the President of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, resting assured that your expertise will enable you to accomplish your mission as the sixty-third President of the General Assembly to the fullest extent. At this, we would like to share with you our interest to convene a thematic debate during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly on an issue of great importance in the early response to emergencies and the reconstruction process: access to education in emergency, post-crisis and transition situations caused by man-made conflicts or natural disasters.

The right to education was established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The Convention on the Rights of the Child further obliges States parties to ensure, without discrimination of any kind, access to education for all children living in their territories at all times. Article 28 of the Convention defines the right to free and compulsory primary education, urges States to develop accessible secondary and other levels of education, and encourages international cooperation in educational matters.

The right to education is acknowledged in a number of other frameworks that all Member States have an obligation to fulfil. The Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments (2000) paid great attention to the educational consequences of emergencies, placing special emphasis on children affected by conflict and natural disasters and on educational programmes that promote mutual understanding, peace and tolerance and that help to prevent violence and conflict. The reality in several regions, in particular within areas affected by conflict and natural disasters, indicates that we are far behind in our quest to achieve the second Millennium Development Goal, which calls upon Member States to achieve universal primary education by 2015. Some 72 million children remain out of school and over half of these children (37 million) live in

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conflict-affected fragile states,[1] and preliminary findings of the strategic review of the Graca Machel study (A/62/228) show that two thirds of the world's out-of-school children at the primary level are in conflict-affected countries. More than half of each of these groups are girls, and countless other children are in areas affected by natural disasters.

During early response to emergencies and the reconstruction process, education, a basic human right, is frequently found to be interrupted, delayed or even denied, as highlighted in a recent report by the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, presented to the Human Rights Council at its eighth session on 4 June 2008 (A/HRC/8/10). On the subject matter, the Special Rapporteur found that "there is a disjunction between social, cultural and economic structures and the educational activities carried out in times of conflict or natural disaster". The Special Rapporteur further found that "there is an urgent need to close this gap because, although the impact of every emergency is different, there is one prevailing characteristic common to all: the interruption, degradation or destruction of education and education systems".

The importance of education is indicated through the great number of United Nations entities, such as the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council and the agencies of the United Nations system, such as the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme, along with civil society and non-governmental organizations that play a supportive role in the fulfilment of this right.

However, partially because of its wide application, there is a certain lack of cohesiveness and overview. The United Nations needs to refocus and renew its attention and revive its support for this enabling and crucial right. A thematic debate at the General Assembly on possibly the largest gap in fulfilling this right — access to education in emergency, post-crisis and transition situations caused by man-made conflicts or natural disasters — would be a timely and urgently needed step. It would allow for a better overview of current work and dialogues, such as on reaching children out of school in these situations. By safeguarding the right to education in emergencies, Governments and the international community send out a forceful message about the future.

We, the undersigned, request this debate and believe the dialogue will better enable the international community to increase access to education, improve the quality of education and promote education as an effective part of every humanitarian and emergency response by renewing school infrastructure, improving a safe and secure learning environment, ensuring a relevant, non-biased curriculum that promotes peace, tolerance and understanding, enhancing capacities of local personnel and institutions, improving accountability in school management, increasing cooperation and effectiveness and other important measures.

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[1] International Save the Children Alliance, *Last in Line, Last in School 2008: How donors can support education for children affected by conflict and emergencies*.

We hope that you will give this proposal serious consideration, and notify us at your earliest convenience. We assure you of our deep commitment to support your efforts in an area that has the potential to change our world in a profoundly positive way.

It would be appreciated if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 64.

(*Signed*) Jean-Marie **Ehouzou**
Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Miloš **Prica**
Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Jorge **Urbina**
Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Maria **Rubiales de Chamorro**
Permanent Representative of Nicaragua to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Morten **Wetland**
Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Nassir Abdulaziz **Al-Nasser**
Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations

United Nations A/63/501

General Assembly

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Sixty-third session
Agenda items 118 and 125

Programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009

United Nations common system

Administrative and financial implications of the decisions and recommendations contained in the report of the International Civil Service Commission for 2008

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the statement submitted by the Secretary-General (A/63/360) on the administrative and financial implications for the biennium 2008-2009 of the decisions and recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission on the common system, as contained in the report of the Commission to the General Assembly for 2008.

2. As in the past, the Advisory Committee has confined its consideration of the financial implications of recommendations contained in the report of the Commission to those submitted to the General Assembly by the Secretary-General in his statement. The Advisory Committee has not commented on the recommendations themselves or on their underlying methodology.

3. As indicated in the Secretary-General's statement, the report of the Commission contains decisions and recommendations with financial implications for the organizations of the United Nations system related to the following issues:

(a) Conditions of service of staff in the Professional and higher categories:

(i) Base/floor salary scale;

(ii) Mobility and hardship allowance;

(iii) Dependency allowances;

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(b) Conditions of service applicable to staff in the General Service and related categories:

(i) Survey of best prevailing conditions of employment in Geneva;

(ii) Survey of best prevailing conditions of employment in Vienna;

(c) Conditions of service applicable to all categories of staff:

(i) Level of education grant;

(ii) Hazard pay for internationally recruited staff.

II. Conditions of service of staff in the Professional and higher categories

4. As indicated in paragraph 3 of the Secretary-General's statement, the cumulative movement of the United States federal civil service net salaries in Washington, D.C., the current comparator, increased by 2.33 per cent as from 1 January 2008. As a result, the comparator's reference salary (GS-13/GS-14) was 2.33 per cent higher than the net salary of a P-4/VI in the current United Nations base/floor salary scale. In accordance with the approved procedures and past practices, this would call for an upward adjustment of 2.33 per cent in the common system salary scale for staff in the Professional and higher categories, as from 1 January 2009. The increase in the base/floor salary scale would be implemented through the standard method of consolidating post adjustment multiplier points into base/floor salary, namely, by increasing base salary while commensurately reducing post adjustment levels. According to the Secretary-General, the financial implications of the above recommendation amount to $183,800 for the United Nations programme budget for 2009.

5. With regard to mobility and hardship allowance, the Advisory Committee notes that, in accordance with the decisions of the Commission, as approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 61/239, the amounts payable under the new mobility and hardship scheme that came into effect on 1 January 2007 are to be reviewed every three years. According to the Secretary-General, as the amounts were originally set in 2005 with the expectation that they would come into effect on 1 January 2006, any revised amounts would need to come into effect on 1 January 2009. The Secretary-General estimates the financial implications of the Commission's recommendation for the United Nations programme budget for 2009 at $959,400.

6. The Advisory Committee notes that the Commission decided to recommend to the General Assembly that, effective 1 January 2009: (a) the children's allowance should be set as a global flat-rate amount of $2,686 per annum and the disabled children's allowance should be double that amount, $5,372 per annum; (b) the secondary dependant's allowance should be set at $940 per annum; (c) at hard currency locations, the United States dollar amount of the allowance should be converted to local currency, using the official United Nations rate of exchange as at the date of promulgation, and should remain unchanged until the next biennial review; (d) the dependency allowances should be reduced by the amount of any direct payments received by staff from a Government in respect of dependants. The Secretary-General estimates the financial implications of the Commission's recommendation for the United Nations programme budget for 2009 at $1,122,500.

III. Conditions of service of staff in the General Service and related categories

7. The Advisory Committee notes that in February 2008 the Commission completed and approved the results of the survey of best prevailing conditions of employment in Geneva, with March 2007 as the reference month. As the recommended salary scale was 1.81 per cent lower than the scale in effect in March 2007, there are no financial implications related to its implementation. However, the financial implications related to the revision of the rates of dependency allowances are estimated by the Secretary-General at $36,800 for the United Nations programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.

8. The Advisory Committee also observes that the Commission conducted a survey of best prevailing conditions of employment for the General Service staff in Vienna, with November 2007 as the reference month. As the recommended salary scale is 1.57 per cent lower than the scale in effect in November 2007, there are no financial implications related to its implementation. However, the financial implications related to the revision of the rates of dependency allowances are estimated by the Secretary-General at $13,500 for the United Nations programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.

IV. Conditions of service applicable to all categories of staff

9. The Secretary-General reports that the financial implications of the recommendations of the Commission on the level of the education grant for the United Nations programme budget for 2009 are estimated at $514,300. The Commission's recommendations on the level of the education grant are contained in paragraph 62 of the report of the Commission for 2008.

10. The Secretary-General reports that the financial implications of the recommendation of the Commission for a 5 per cent increase in the level of hazard pay for international staff, effective 1 January 2009, are estimated at $783,900 for the United Nations programme budget for 2009. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, on the recommendation of the Department of Safety and Security, duty stations eligible for hazard pay are designated by the Chairman of the Commission on authority delegated to him by the Commission.

11. The Advisory Committee was also informed that hazard pay is authorized for a limited period, normally up to three months at a time, subject to ongoing review, and is lifted when hazardous conditions are deemed to have abated. Both internationally recruited staff and locally recruited staff are eligible to receive hazard pay; however, locally recruited staff may receive hazard pay only for those days they are required to report to work and actually do so. Internationally recruited staff receive hazard pay as decided and adjusted by the Commission and reported to the General Assembly. Locally recruited staff receive hazard pay, which is set at 25 per cent of one twelfth of the midpoint of the pertinent local General Service annual salary scale and is therefore adjusted when this salary scale is adjusted.

V. Conclusion

12. The financial implications for the United Nations programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 resulting from decisions and recommendations of the Commission are estimated by the Secretary-General at $3,614,200. He indicates that those requirements will be taken into consideration in the preparation of the first performance report of the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009, in accordance with existing practice. **The Advisory Committee has no objection to the Secretary-General's approach.**

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Security Council

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Sixty-third session
Agenda item 15
The situation in the Middle East

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Identical letters dated 21 October 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I transmit to you herewith a statistical summary of violations committed by Israel from 8 to 14 October 2008 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 15, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nawaf **Salam**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the identical letters dated 21 October 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Subject: Israeli violations, acts of aggression and other activities from 8 to 14 October 2008, inclusive

Air violations

On 8 October 2008 between 0635 and 1318 hours, an enemy Israeli reconnaissance aircraft violated Lebanese airspace, entering over Naqurah and circling the South, Damur and Beirut before departing over the sea off Naqurah.

Between 1106 and 1225 hours, two enemy Israeli military aircraft violated Lebanese airspace, entering from over Kafr Killa and flying over all regions of Lebanon before departing over 'Alma al-Sha'b.

On 9 October 2008 at 2240 hours, an enemy Israeli reconnaissance aircraft violated Lebanese airspace, entering from over the sea off Naqurah and flying north-east as far as Hirmil. It circled the region of Hirmil, Baalbek and Riyyaq before returning south and departing over Naqurah at 0445 hours on 10 October 2008.

On 10 October 2008 at 1800 hours, an enemy Israeli reconnaissance aircraft violated Lebanese airspace, entering from over 'Alma al-Sha'b. It circled over the South, Beirut and Shikka before departing over Rumaysh at 0320 hours on 11 October 2008.

On 12 October 2008 between 0645 and 2355 hours, an enemy Israeli reconnaissance aircraft violated Lebanese airspace, entering from over 'Alma al-Sha'b. It circled over the South and the Bekaa before departing over Naqurah.

On 13 October 2008 four enemy Israeli military aircraft violated Lebanese airspace as follows: two entered at 1100 hours and two more at 1110 hours from over Kafr Killa, and flew north to the western Bekaa. They circled between the western Bekaa and the South and over the sea, before departing over the sea off Naqurah.

At 1510 hours, an enemy Israeli reconnaissance aircraft violated Lebanese airspace, entering from over the sea off Naqurah. It circled over Beirut, Ba'abda, the Shuf, Shikka, Jubayl and Kasrawan and departed at 0415 hours on 14 October 2008 over Naqurah.

Sea violations

On 9 October 2008 at 0315 hours, an Israeli enemy gunboat in the open sea within Palestinian territorial waters off Ra's Naqurah directed a searchlight towards Lebanese territorial waters for 30 seconds.

On 13 October 2008 at 0200 hours, an Israeli enemy gunboat in the open sea within Palestinian territorial waters off Ra's Naqurah directed a searchlight towards Lebanese territorial waters.

Attacks on the ground

On 8 October 2008 between 1430 and 1530 hours, enemy Israeli forces at the Radar outpost (Kafr Shuba) in the occupied Shab'a Farms intermittently unleashed several bursts of light- and medium-weapons fire.

On 12 October 2008 at 1905 hours, the Israeli enemy shone a searchlight for 30 seconds from the Zar'it barracks towards the Marwahin triangle.

On 13 October 2008 between 2155 and 2205 hours, while the Lebanese Armed Forces were patrolling the Blue Line on the plain near the village of Aytarun, enemy Israeli forces on several occasions directed a searchlight towards them.

On 14 October 2008 the Israeli enemy shone a searchlight for two minutes from the Zar'it barracks towards the Marwahin triangle.

Other activities

On 10 October 2008 at 1135 hours, inside occupied Palestinian territory opposite the town of Hula, north-east of the Abbad Lebanese Armed Forces post, an enemy Israeli foot patrol comprising 10 men and three dogs crossed the technical fence, without violating the Blue Line. They departed at 1220 hours.